

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

July 3, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Prison Epistles

The Letter to the Philippians – The Joy of Faith

Text - Philippians 3:12 – 21 – *Press Toward the Mark*

Congregational Reading – Philippians 3:12

Introduction

In the first eleven verses of chapter three, the Apostle Paul reviews his life, and his many accomplishments before his salvation experience on the road to Damascus, and he basically states that none of those things were important when compared to his relationship with Christ. He said that he counted them “but dung” that he might win Christ. All the things that were once so important to him: they were badges of honor; they were things that his peers applauded him for; those things he said were not important at all compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Read vs. 1 – 11

Transition

In these remaining ten verses of chapter three, Paul will now state that he hasn't arrived yet at where he wanted to be spiritually. He still had a long way to go, but he was pressing toward the mark, and that's what we want to consider this morning. We want to see that God wants us to “*Press Toward the Mark*” as well.

I. Continue In the Journey (vs. 12 – 15)

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 3:12)

We haven't already arrived, spiritually. We are always in a state of growth. We will never know it all, and we will never be perfect on this earth.

I love that Paul says that he is apprehending something, the image of Christ, but he has also been apprehended. God has got the believer in His hand, and God will bring the believer where he wants him to go. (John 10:28 – 29)

I love what it said in Philippians 1:16:

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:" (Philippians 1:6)

Not everybody that claims to be a Christian is truly His child, but every person that has been genuinely born into the family of God will someday be conformed into the very image of Christ.

A. You Must Let Go of the Past (v. 13 a)

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, (Philippians 3:13 a)

This is the first and hardest part of the Christian journey: we must be willing to **let go** of the past.

- 1 Past Failures – guilt will bog you down
- 2 Past Successes – Yesterday's success was merely a step along the path of God's greater plan for your life.

Jesus said, "greater works than these shall ye do." Your past successes may serve to strengthen your faith and prepare you for future things, but we can become content with what God did with us yesterday.

The same is true of this church. We have had some great days, great successes, but God wants us to keep moving forward, keep growing, keep striving together in order to fulfill His will for us. To do this, we must let go of the past.

- 3 Past Relationships – we will develop this a little bit more in the next point, but for now, let me just say that the old, unsaved friends that we had are a detriment to future growth. They are like anchors that weigh you down.

B. Look Forward To and Latch On to God's Future (Philippians 13b – 14)

"... and reaching forth unto those things which are before. I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14)

God has got a wonderful plan for your life. Embrace it. However, to embrace what God has for you in the future, you must let go of the past.

The prize is God's high calling for your life. It eventually leads to Heaven, but it includes a plan of service for you down here on the earth. It's called God's will. Find out what God's perfect will is for your life, and then embrace it, and follow it with all the diligence and dedication that you can give it.

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." (Philippians 3:15)

The "perfect" (τέλειος - *teleios*) are the saved, God's children – those that are born-again. This does not mean that you are sinless, just complete in Christ, meaning that everything has been accomplished or finished for our salvation.

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:" (Colossians 2:9-10)

Notice the phrase, "and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." I love that. God will straighten you out. Paul is trying to show them something, but he knows that if they don't understand it yet, God will reveal it to them.

II. Company With Those Who Are on the Same Path (vs. 16 – 19)

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." (Philippians 3:16)

Notice – "us" – Though we each walk with God individually; in many ways we are all on the same path. That is why it is important to be a part of the local church. We are a group of believers, a gathering of people, that should all be on the same journey.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

There is strength in numbers. We can feed off each other's faith. We can encourage each other.

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17)

Spiritual leaders can also help us:

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." (Hebrews 13:7)

A. Follow Leaders (v. 17)

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." (Philippians 3:17)

But be very careful that your leaders are following Christ.

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

When your leaders start to stray, you stay on the path

B. Lead Followers

Be a good example to those who are looking up to you. Watch your testimony – make sure that you are pointing people in the right direction with your life.

C. Forsake the Fallen (vs. 18 – 19)

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Philippians 3:18 - 19)

This is not to say that we should not try to help the fallen to get back on the right path, but we must not allow them to pull us off the path.

Illustrate – Brother Horton used to preach to us preachers about veering off the narrow way. He said that every Christian leader that he knew who had fallen off the path, had all fallen by one of three ways. It was either sexual immorality, problems with finances, or doctrinal heresy.

His points were always the same, but he would use different letters to illiterate them:

Dames, Dollars, Doctrine; Females, Finances, Fundamentals; Ladies, Lucre, Liberalism;
Maids, Money, Modernism

Many of my heroes have veered off the path. Some have crashed and burned, some have just gradually moved away from the fundamental position that they once held. But, because those who used to be my leaders, my heroes, those whom I used to follow have fallen or strayed, it does not give me the right to follow them. It should humble me and scare me into realizing that if it could happen to them, it could also happen to me.

Ultimately, however, I must choose to follow Christ.

III. Consider the Final Destination (vs. 20 – 21)

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:" (Philippians 3:20)

“conversation” (πολίτευμα - *politeuma*) – means a few things in the Bible. It can be used as we use it today, meaning a dialogue between two or more parties. It also has a broader meaning in that it refers to more than just our words but includes our behavior as well. Here in Philippians 3:20, the word, *conversation*, means citizenship, meaning that we are citizens of Heaven. We are living temporarily here on this earth, and we have a mission to perform for the Lord here, but we belong to Heaven. We are merely ambassadors here. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

That is why the Bible says in Romans 12:2:

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
(Romans 12:2)

Since we are being fitted for Heaven, which is our destination, we should have it on our mind to be gradually letting go of this world, allowing God to change us from carnal earth dwellers, to heavenly, spiritual representatives of our home country, Heaven.

*This world is not my home I'm just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore*

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
(Philippians 3:21)

God is changing us, molding us into His image. God is chipping away at our old, sinful flesh, and is reshaping us, conforming us to the very image of Christ.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

I am not the man I should be, but thank God, I am not the man I used to be, and someday, I'll be even better, because God is constantly working on me.

Practical Points:

1. Get to know all that you can about your destination.

Illustrate – when you are going on a vacation, you will do all kinds of research on the place that you are going. You will learn about the places, and the people.

Since your destination after this life is Heaven, why not find out from the Bible all that you can about Heaven and the Person that reigns there. You can also get excited about the people you will meet: your loved ones, famous saints from history, and people from the Bible.

By the way – There has been a lot of people these days that are bashing the concept of a separated, independent, local Baptist church; but the way I see it, where we are headed (Heaven) will be a gathering of believers in a place that is completely separated from this sinful world. What will we be doing there? We will be praising and worshipping Christ, singing the songs of God, and serving Him. Seems to me that is what we are trying to do down here at the church. Don't let this crowd that's bashing what we are sway you. They are trying to get us to go back to be more like what we were, but God wants us to embrace who we really are, and where we are going.

2. Find people that are travelling down the same road that you are on. Encourage them and let them encourage you.
 - a. Latch on to people that are a little further along in their journey than you are.
 - b. Let go of people that are holding you back.

Illustration – when I first got saved, there were many people that I looked up to, but as I grew, many of those same people that were further down the road than I was got to the point where they didn't want to go any further, and I was forced to leave them behind.

3. Let go of this world. Don't become too attached to this temporary place. It is not your home. Heaven makes this place look like a Garbage Can.

Illustrate – Cary Schmidt – Dimples vs. Disneyland

By the way – the greatest joy and peace you can have in this life is being in the very center of God's will. There is great joy in serving Jesus.